DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 191 UD 028 675

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TITLE Effect of Student Gender Bias toward the Instructor on Classroom Management at the Secondary Level.
PUB DATE Dec 91
NOTE 47p.; Master's Thesis, Siena Heights College.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; *Discipline; Females; High Schools; *High School Students; Males; Obedience; Rating Scales; Secondary School Teachers; *Sex Bias; Student Attitudes; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; Teacher Characteristics

ABSTRACT

A study was done of high school students' perceptions of gender bias on classroom management. Using an 8-item survey instrument developed from ideas presented by several classroom management experts and teachers, 198 female and 156 male high school students were surveyed. Students rated two teachers, identified only by gender, on each survey item. The students chose teachers who they felt fit the instrument's description of having a well-disciplined class. The results indicate that female teachers were more likely to be chosen as effective disciplinarians by female students, and male teachers were more likely to be chosen by male students. Female teachers were rated higher than were male teachers on four survey items. Male instructors were rated higher than female teachers on only one item. Female instructors were rated equal to or higher than male instructors on seven survey items. Also, the number of female teachers chosen as effective disciplinarians increased at each grade level. The only negative for female teachers discovered by this study was the belief that women are more likely to become frustrated than men. Included are copies of a letter to teachers, the survey instrument, and 26 references. (JB)

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EFFECT OF STUDENT GENDER BIAS TOWARD THE INSTRUCTOR ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

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In partial fulfillment of the requirement

for Master of Arts in Secondary Education

Siena Heights College

Adrian, Michigan

December 1991

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate high school students' perceptions of gender bias on classroom management. A survey was given to 198 female and 156 male high school students. This instrument was developed from ideas presented by several classroom management experts and the teachers in the school surveyed. The survey consisted of eight items related to classroom management. The students rated two teachers, identified only by gender, on each item. The students chose teachers whom they felt fit the instrument's description of having a well-disciplined class. The results indicated that women teachers were more likely to be chosen as effective disciplinarians by female students and men teachers were more likely to be chosen by male students. Female teachers were rated higher than male teachers on four items. Male instructors were rated higher than female teachers on only one item. This study concluded that gender bias is less of a problem at the high school level than what is perceived by many teachers. Female instructors were rated equal to or higher than male instructors on seven of the eight survey items. Also, the number of female teachers chosen as effective disciplinarians increased at each grade level. The only real negative for women teachers discovered by this study was the belief that women are more likely to get frustrated than men.

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Introduction

Discipline is one of the biggest hurdles facing high school teachers. But is it a bigger hurdle for female teachers than male teachers? Sexism appears in many segments of American society. The number of powerful women compared to men in politics, business, or the military shows how men have benefited from gender biases. However, schools traditionally have had a greater female influence at the teaching level and therefore should be less sexist as institutions. But are they?

Research shows that male and female instructors are rated differently on their teaching abilities by the students and it is usually a bias that favors men. Male teachers may be unaware of this bias and female teachers may feel less effective as classroom managers because they lack some of the respect that male instructors receive from the students. Do male teachers have fewer discipline problems as a result of a gender bias?

There is a great amount of research in the area of classroom management at the secondary level, but it does not include the effects of gender bias. On the other hand, although there is very little written about classroom management at the college level, studies on gender bias seem to focus on this level. There is a definite need for research which investigates the role of gender bias on classroom discipline at the secondary level.

Research at the college level indicates that male professors are perceived as more competent and effective than their female colleagues. Research in classroom management at the high school level shows that competence plays a big role in limiting discipline problems. If female instructors are perceived as less competent at the college level, where discipline is generally not a problem, then what about students' perception of female high school teachers? Because so many women teach high school, research in the areas of gender bias and discipline is very important, as indicated later in the review of the related literature.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate high school students' perceptions of gender bias on classroom management.

Review of the Related Literature

This review of the related literature investigates two major concerns of education. The first concern is the issue of gender bias in the classroom. It is important for a teacher to be aware of the differences between male and female students, especially with respect to how they perceive the instructor based on the instructor's gender. The second concern is the characteristics of a well-disciplined classroom. Although there are many approaches to classroom management, most have certain attributes which are universal. In this study the gender biases will be investigated in relation to the discipline aspect of education to see what difference teacher gender makes in classroom management as perceived by the students.

Gender Bias

Male students are more biased in their beliefs about gender differences than female students, according to the research of Fishel and Pottker (1977). These authors reported on the beliefs of boys and girls in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 and found several items showing gender bias by both sexes, but especially the males. For example, one item on the survey upon which the research is based asked if a trained female garage mechanic could fix a car as well as a man. Fifty percent of the girls said "yes", but only thirty-three percent of the boys said

"yes". Another item asked if there should be female astronauts. The girls responded more favorably again with 58% saying "yes", as compared to only 35% of the boys saying "yes".

Responses to two other items of importance showed less bias; however, they do show an interesting difference between the responses of boys and girls. One item asked if women were as intelligent as men. Only six percent of the girls said "no". The boys said "no" in 29% of the cases, which makes this one of the less-biased items, despite the difference between male and female responses. The other item important for the purposes of this study asked whether female teachers were as good as male teachers. Seventy-eight percent of the boys said "yes" and 91% of the girls said "yes", a positive sign for teachers. However, another item showed that some students, especially male students, felt that women were not qualified to be authority figures higher in the school hierarchy than a teacher. When asked if a female could be as good a school principal as a male, 73% of the girls said "yes", but only 53% of the males said "yes". Finally, an item important to this study because of its role in classroom management asked if women become upset more easily than men. In almost equal numbers, the girls showed 83% agreement with the item and the boys 85% agreement with the item (Fishel & Pottker, 1977).

Whether the gender biases that students have affect how

they perceive their instructors is important to the teacher because any prejudice may hurt the learning process. Even studies which found male and female instructors equal in overall ratings showed some difference between the instructors on individual items related to effectiveness and interpersonal skills.

Most studies involve college professors, including a study that asked students to rank their instructors on items ranging from "prepared for class" to "showed an interest in students". Although the overall scores were equal, an important difference between the genders was discovered. Women were rated higher on items that showed concern for the students; men did better on items related directly to instruction. For example, males were rated higher on the item "spoke understandably" and females on the item "promptly returned homework and tests" (Elmore & LaPointe, 1974). These may not be actual differences, but if they are due to preconceived beliefs resulting from a gender bias, then this could be a problem for the instructor who does not fit that stereotype. In fact, students were found to expect women to be friendlier (D'Agostino, Dill, & Kierstead, 1988) and to offer greater interpersonal support (Bennett, 1982). Stereotypes can help or hurt an instructor depending on the circumstances; because of this their existence can be very important to the instructor.

Stereotypes can be very difficult to overcome, even when they have the potential for benefits. The female instructor who is accessible is rated higher than the female instructor who is not accessible. She is either rewarded (higher student ratings) or punished (lower student ratings) depending on how approachable students perceive her to be. Male instructors are not affected as much because they are not expected to be accessible. However, even when male professors were available to students they were not perceived as such (Bennett, 1982). Both male and female college instructors are affected by gender bias, but in the example above females are more likely to suffer negative consequences.

Attractive instructors are rated higher for skills of sensitivity, communication, and knowledge. Some skills, however, are independent of attractiveness, but are dependent on gender. Males scored higher on skills related to competence and effectiveness (Lombardo & Tocci, 1979). Women instructors were not considered as competent as male instructors until the college students were given a reason for that competence. Not only was attractiveness more important to the ratings of female instructors, but when a woman was described as an "award-winning" teacher most of the sex bias shown by students disappeared (Basow & Silberg, 1987). In summary, male instructors tend to be rated higher than female instructors and are affected less by other factors related to student

perceptions, like attractiveness.

Actual gender makes a difference in how a college professor is rated by students of both genders and the teacher's apparent masculinity makes a difference. According to Harris (1976), masculine qualities (aggressive, directive, active) are rated more highly than feminine qualities (passive, facilitating, listening), clearly an advantage for male instructors. All variables except warmth were rated higher for a teacher using a masculine mode of instruction. In fact, an androgynous professor was given the highest ratings in an evaluation of eight written profiles, presumably because this profile combined the best qualities of both sexes (Basow & Howe, 1987). However, most teachers are not androgynous; therefore, males still appear to have the edge when evaluated by students.

Gender bias is found in many teacher evaluations, but effective teaching is the most important factor in those evaluations (Dukes & Victoria, 1989). However, students' ratings of instruction showed male instructors as more effective than female instructors (D'Agostino et al., 1988). It is hard to tell whether gender bias plays a smaller role than effectiveness in teacher ratings because males are often perceived as more effective than females. Large or small, gender bias is a factor that must be considered when reviewing student evaluations of teachers. Because gender bias occurs in other segments of education, classroom management may be affected and

could create an atmosphere where discipline is harder for female instructors.

Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is multi-faceted. A teacher with good discipline incorporates successful learning while preventing misbehavior. Part of preventing misbehavior means competent teaching and earning the respect of students. Also, an effective teacher is organized, positive, and a good motivator. He or she allows some freedom, but knows when to enforce the rules. Overall, an instructor is a good classroom manager when he or she teachers effectively.

Each of the following sections is related to good classroom management and provides information necessary for effective teaching. The first section looks at avoiding misbehavior through successful learning and the second section points out common types of misbehavior. Competent teaching and respect of the teacher are discussed in the next two sections. Both topics are important to good classroom management because they not only prevent some misbehavior, but allow the teacher to discipline effectively. This effectiveness is helped by the teacher who is organized and positive, topics considered in the next two sections. Student motivation and independence are valuable to classroom management because they help to develop an environment that discourages misbehavior. The final

two sections look at rules and whether punishment is necessary.

The Importance of Success

Effective teachers monitor two basic behaviors in the classroom. First, they involve students in learning activities, and second, they make sure the students obey classroom procedures (Emmer, Evertson, & Sanford, 1989). To be effective teachers and classroom managers these two behaviors must be intertwined. If a classroom is managed well, then students will remain on task, act responsibly, and show good human relations (Charles, 1985). Dreikurs (cited in Charles, 1985) felt that all humans have as a major goal being accepted by other people. This includes students, and their need to be accepted is greater than their need to learn. To meet this need for acceptance and to allow students to learn, teachers must prevent the feelings of failure that lead to new means of acceptance, like misbehaving.

Schools are a great place for success and recognition according to Glasser (1969). He agrees with Dreikurs that a general sense of failure, especially the failure to find acceptance from others, leads to inappropriate behavior. To manage the classroom well and provide a learning environment, teachers must allow students to feel successful. This feeling of success leads to good discipline, which then leads to a learning environment, which once again results in feelings of

success. Thus, there is a continuous cycle based on positive feedback involving both learning and management behaviors.

Types of Misbehavior

Good classroom management can mean many things, but usually teachers (and most students) want the learning environment to be relatively quiet and orderly. The students are expected to be courteous, honest, and respectful (Charles, 1985). Students are usually good children and not hard to manage, but sometimes serious behavior problems do exist. Criminal behavior in school can include assault, theft, vandalism, drug use, and intimidation (Duke, 1980). However, 99% of all lost class time, according to Jones (cited in Charles, 1985), is talking without permission (80%) and general goofing off (19%). Because the most serious infraction under "goofing off" is considered getting out of one's seat without permission, discipline is not usually serious.

Although most problems are minor, classroom management is still important because disturbances interfere with learning. Teachers must use discipline, but also learn to accept some misbehavior as a part of the job. Teachers must remember that most students respect them, enjoy school, want to learn, and even want rules enforced if they are fair. Also, parents want their children to learn, and most feel teachers

do a good job (Charles, 1985).

Teachers need to understand the reasons behind misbehavior in order to maintain discipline. Misbehavior may be the result of peer pressure, failure to succeed, or stress in the home. Teachers should not take misbehavior personally (Ramsey, 1981). Classroom management is an important function of teaching, but so is instructing the students so they may learn. A competent teacher is able to do both.

Competent Teaching

Instructing is teaching students and managing is organizing the students so that instruction will be effective (Wallen & Wallen, 1978). Both instruction and classroom management must be done well for a teacher to be competent, and competent teachers have fewer discipline problems. Once a teacher feels adequate, then security and stability will be established in the classroom (Ramsey, 1981). Ginott (1972) believed the most important ingredient in classroom management is the teacher's own self-discipline; by modeling the behavior wanted, the teacher encourages student success. Kounin (1970) believes the teacher should know what is going on in his or her whole classroom, and, therefore, prevent misbehavior rather than stop it, an awareness he calls "withitness". The competent teacher has fewer problems because he or she is a respected, prepared, and positive role model.

Teacher Respect

Respect is an important part of good classroom management. Respect allows for good discipline and is a result of good discipline; they feed one another. The teacher must respect himself or herself, but he or she must also have the respect of the administration, the students, and the students' parents. If a teacher is classified as a good instructor by his or her principal, then he or she is more likely to be a good manager (Johnson, 1980). It is possible to see a link between principal support and effective teaching, but it is impossible to say which comes first. According to Canter and Canter (1976), their "assertive discipline" is based on the belief that firm control can be humane and liberating, but for this approach to work the teacher must receive help from administrators and parents. Most parents do respect teachers and will support responsible classroom discipline. Included in good classroom management is respect for the teachers and their work by all involved, especially the students. Of course the respect should be mutual and the teachers must also respect the students and their work (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1971). The respect and support of students, parents, and administrators provide each teacher with a solid foundation on which to build good classroom management.

Organization

Another key to having a well-disciplined class is to be organized. Kounin (1970) uses interesting terms that illustrate what a good classroom manager is like. The teacher is able to "overlap", that is, to do two or more things at once. He or she is able to move between lessons without "jerkiness" or "slowdowns". With jerkiness, the teacher moves on before the students are ready for something new. Slowdowns are delays that waste time between activities. Kounin, like most experts in the field of classroom management, feels that students on task are less likely to be discipline problems. To be sure that students are on task, teachers must be totally prepared and have well-established routines (Ramsey, 1981). Characteristics of an organized teacher include management procedures known by the students, rules that the pupils understand, and a discipline system that handles most problems quickly. Also, the teacher develops long-range and short-range lesson plans, he or she prepares materials ahead of time, and he or she is time-conscious. The organized teacher has an established schedule that he or she follows, but does not panic when the unexpected happens. The best test of an organized classroom would be that a substitute has an easy time working in this classroom (Johnson, 1980). Good organization prevents discipline problems and allows for effective teaching.

Positive Attitude

An effective teacher must have a positive attitude towards all aspects of his or her job. To be a good manager and a good instructor the teacher needs the cooperation of the students. Therefore, the classroom should have an environment that is non-threatening and positive (Dreikurs et al., 1971). To establish a positive climate the students need a clear set of goals that must be achieved. The teacher should encourage the students to do good work and should not accept poor excuses. Praise is important to learners, especially when it focuses on the students' accomplishments (Emmer et al., 1989). Effective teachers look for the good that is found in everybody and build on the positive. Bad things will happen occasionally, but teachers should minimize the negative (Dreikurs et al., 1971). To make the class a positive learning environment, teachers should be energetic, interesting, and open (Ramsey, 1981). When teachers convey their joy of learning to the students they see positive results.

Student Motivation

A big part of a positive school environment is a classroom filled with motivated students. If the children are stimulated to learn, then they will work to their potential without disrupting the class (Wallen & Wallen, 1978).

Teachers can help students become motivated, but motivation itself comes from within the student. Therefore, teachers must provide a classroom that encourages the motivation to learn.

One obvious trait of effective teachers is the fact that they are interesting and the students are satisfied with their work (Glasser, 1990). As role models, teachers must also be motivated. If the teacher is bored, then the students will be bored (Ramsey, 1981). Reinforcement is important to all parts of learning, including motivation. Without reinforcers students are bored and discouraged with their work (Skinner, 1983). The reinforcement should be positive and, because motivation is from within, teachers should not put extra pressure on the students (Charles, 1985). Once motivated, the students will be good learners.

Student Independence

Students are individuals and need to be treated as individuals when it comes to learning and discipline. Each student is as important to the class as any other student and each student has his or her own needs. Students need both freedom to explore and limits put on their behavior. They should work with the teacher and other students, but also be encouraged to demonstrate their independence. Flexibility is important in the classroom, however it should not cause

disruptions (Dreikurs et al., 1971). Good classroom management allows for different learning styles and helps students become responsible for their behavior by letting them work independently (Wallen & Wallen, 1978). By letting students work in the way that best suits them, teachers will see more high-quality work and classroom management will be easier (Glasser, 1990). Of course, cooperation is still important in the classroom because during discussion students discover ideas that would not have been discovered while working alone (Skinner, 1983).

Cooperative learning works because it gives students power, but it also has some limitations. Included in cooperative learning is respect for others and their work, responsibility for individual behavior, and a clear understanding of what is taking place in the classroom (Dreikurs et al., 1971). According to Johnson and Johnson (cited in Kohn, 1987), cooperative learning allows students to learn better, feel better, and get along better. Cooperative learning allows students to make decisions and students should have some power in the classroom and should develop some self-direction. However, student power must be kept within the limits determined, at least in part, by the teacher with effective discipline.

Need for Rules

Rules are important to both the teacher and the students.

As classroom manager, the teacher needs rules to maintain a learning environment. As learners, students need a sense of order to accomplish what is necessary for quality work. Although learning requires a sense of freedom, rules help train students in discipline. There are general rules by which all people live and children need to understand the necessity of these rules. School is a good place for students to become accustomed to these rules and adopt them as their own (Dreikurs et al., 1971). Establishing rules is tough enough because there are so many variables, but understanding why students misbehave can help. Misbehavior is usually a cry for attention, a source of power, the result of frustration, or an attempt at retaliation (Ramsey, 1981).

Regardless of the reason behind misbehavior, rules should be developed for both the teacher and the students. They should incorporate school policy and common courtesy. Above all, they should be few in number, simple, fair, and consistent. Natural consequences should play a role in controlling behavior, and kindness should be combined with firmness (Dreikurs et al., 1971).

Glasser (1969) feels that rules should lead to individual and class success. Therefore, the teacher must deal with students who misbehave quickly and fairly. The teacher cannot accept excuses for bad behavior, but the student should be allowed to make choices about more appropriate behavior.

Fairness and consistency must be maintained for successful classroom management, but both the teacher and the students must accept some exceptions to each rule. If inconsistencies become a problem, then it is due to an unreasonable rule or poor teacher monitoring. This leads to three alternatives: reteaching the rule, modifying the rule, or abandoning the rule altogether (Emmer et al., 1989). Rules are important to classroom management, but they are only as good as the teacher enforcing them.

The Question of Punishment

An important question related to the enforcement of rules is whether punishment is necessary. Most researchers would answer negatively, punishment may teach students what to avoid, but it does not teach them appropriate behavior. Misbehavior is not erased by punishment; it may even be reinforced by punishment. Usually punishment is for the teacher's benefit and is not a good deterrent to misbehavior (Ginott, 1972). Punishment often results in more problems than the original infraction. Punishment usually has no lasting value and may create unfriendly feelings (Dreikurs et al., 1971). Punished behavior is often a positive reinforcer for that behavior, which then may become impossible to suppress. Threats may be even worse than the actual punishment because they encourage the students to go as far in the misbehavior as they dare,

possibly engaging in severe examples of misbehavior. Instead of punishing the students for inappropriate behavior, the teacher should strive for appropriate behavior and reward that behavior (Skinner, 1968).

Teachers should praise students when they earn praise and enforce rules firmly, but fairly when they break rules (Johnson, 1980). Teachers must stop inappropriate behavior immediately to maintain discipline, but avoid punishment. Instead, they should rely on keeping students on task and giving positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.

Classroom management has many components and each component is important to the task of providing an environment that discourages misbehavior and encourages learning. These components include successful learning by the student and competent teaching by the instructor. The teacher needs to be respected, organized, and positive. He or she should motivate the students and allow some independence. Finally, the teacher should set rules and consequences for breaking the rules, but avoid punishment.

Hypothesis

There is much research on the subject of classroom management at the high school level. There is also data showing gender bias against female professors. However, the high school research fails to examine gender bias in relation to

discipline and the college research fails completely to examine discipline. Because of the lack of data, the next chapter will investigate the potential for gender bias affecting classroom management by surveying the students of a small high school.

Method

Research investigating a link between gender bias and classroom discipline at the high school level is clearly lacking. Therefore, this study involved the development of a survey to be used at the high school level. Its main goal was to identify gender bias of students that may exist in the area of classroom management. Because classroom discipline is an integral part of teaching, a potential problem, like gender bias, is important to recognize.

Subjects

The survey for this study was given to the entire student population present on May 15, 1991 at Onsted High School in Lenawee County, Michigan. The student body that day consisted of 198 female students and 156 male students. The students are Caucasian with a small percentage of Hispanics. The school is in a rural area and most families are middle class. The school has thirteen female and nine male teachers and all participated by giving the survey to their entire first period class. Most of the teachers live in Lenawee County, many in the school district surveyed.

Instrument

The survey used in this study was developed using ideas presented by several classroom management experts and the teachers in the school surveyed.

The first survey item, "The teacher has a positive attitude," is supported by research that shows effective teaching and good classroom management require an instructor who is positive. Skinner (cited in Charles, 1985) believed rewards and positive motivation were necessary for students to feel successful. Good teachers, according to Rose (1989), seem to have positive views of others, including administrators, colleagues, and students. Both Canter (1989) and Ramsey (1981) included a positive attitude in their assessment of a teacher with good discipline.

The second survey item, "The students respect this teacher," was created to correspond with the ideas of Charles (1985) and Duke (1980). Both authors felt the respect of the students was a sign of a teacher with good management skills. An instructor who is respected has fewer discipline problems and an easier time handling the problems that do arise.

Item number three on the survey, "The teacher encourages the students to learn," was in response to its support as a good preventative of misbehavior by Rose (1989) and Wallen and Wallen (1978). Keeping the students active and helping

them learn the subject at hand reduces the chance for disruptive behavior. A student who is busy with his or her work is less likely to resort to misbehavior for recognition than a bored student.

The fourth survey item, "The students are aware of the classroom rules", provides the teacher with a reference point when misbehavior occurs. Rose (1989), Canter (1989), and Glasser (1969) believe that rules are necessary and only work when students are aware of them and understand them.

Item number five, "The teacher enforces classroom and school rules fairly and consistently," was cited by many authors. Rose (1989) and Ramsey (1981) feel that any punishment for misbehavior should be fair. Canter (1989), Emmer et al. (1989), and Charles (1985) believed that limits should be set and the consequences of misbehavior consistent. Johnson (1980) and Wallen and Wallen (1978) agreed that an effective classroom manager should be firm, but fair when enforcing rules.

Support for item number six on the survey, "The students listen during lecture and discussion," was found in Rose (1989) and Charles (1985). Both authors feel that students need guidelines in the areas of noise control and relationships with other students. Students need a sense of order and a chance to both hear and be heard.

Item number seven, "The teacher monitors the classroom

and prevents misbehavior," was best explained by Kounin (1970). He describes how an effective teacher prevents misbehavior by being aware of what is going on in the classroom and dealing with any problems quickly and quietly. Kounin uses terms like "withitness" and "overlapping" to clarify how a good classroom manager monitors his or her students.

The last item, "The teacher handles disruptions without getting frustrated," was supported by Canter (1989), Rose (1989), Ginott (1972), and Ramsey (1981). These researchers found that a good teacher is flexible and able to adapt in response to unexpected complications. They believe that an effective instructor maintains his or her sense of humor and rarely loses his or her temper. Also, a teacher who is easily frustrated may become overly cautious and restrictive, limiting his or her options.

In addition to the support found in the research literature, each item was supported in writing by three or more of the teachers of the students surveyed. The teachers were responding to a letter (Appendix A) asking them to describe a well-disciplined classroom. Fifteen teachers of twenty-two answered this letter and the eight items used in the survey were cited more times than any other ideas about classroom management.

The survey was done anonymously, but did ask for the student's grade and gender. It was followed by a descrip-

tion of a well-disciplined class and an explanation of the survey. Next, the survey asked the student to choose two teachers with good discipline, which they noted by gender only, and rate them from 1 to 5 on eight items related to classroom management. Finally, the survey asked the student to list any additional items that he or she felt may have been forgotten but were pertinent to the survey. A copy of the instrument is found in Appendix B.

Procedure

The initial impetus behind this paper was the number of college level studies the author read showing gender bias against female instructors, but the biggest reason for its development was a discussion between the author and two female colleagues. After the author related what he read about gender bias at the college level, both women expressed doubts that they are given the same respect as male teachers. They felt discipline was harder for female teachers because of this apparent lack of respect of some students, especially male students.

The next step was developing the instrument. This involved research at three different college libraries and information received from colleagues of the author in their written responses to the letter asking them to describe a

a well-disciplined classroom. Two months before the instrument was given to the students it was presented to the principal of the high school for approval. The principal was quite responsive to the study and its instrument. After getting the administration's approval it was presented to the teaching staff. A copy of the survey and an explanation of the study were given to each of the teachers two weeks prior to the survey date. This was done at a regular staff meeting to ensure complete attendance. Three teachers were later unsure of the instructions, but their questions were answered individually. One day before the survey was administered each teacher was given enough copies for his or her first period class and reminded about the survey.

The survey was given at the start of first period on Wednesday, May 15, 1991, with a final reminder via the public address system to the staff to return the finished surveys to the classroom of the researcher in the envelope attached as soon as the last student was finished. Before the survey was passed out to the students each teacher explained its purpose and importance. Nineteen of the twenty-two teachers returned their surveys during the first two class periods on May 15, the day it was administered. The remaining three teachers returned their surveys the next day after being reminded by the researcher. Because all students in grades

nine through twelve participated in the survey, May 15 was picked as the survey date to give the freshmen time to know their teachers throughout the school year and to include the seniors before they graduated.

Results

The students were instructed by the instrument to choose two teachers with good discipline; the number of female teachers selected was 395 and the number of male teachers selected was 308, a ratio of 4 to 3. Table A shows the teachers selected by gender in relation to the gender of the students. Table A is divided in a way that shows survey combinations possible and the percentage of each based on student gender.

Table A The Survey Types Based on Teachers Selected Versus Student Gender

Possible survey types based on teachers selected	Total students for each survey type	
	Females	Males
2 females chosen	71 (36%)	24 (15.4%)
2 males chosen	14 (7%)	33 (21.2%)
1 female and 1 male chosen	111 (56%)	96 (61.5%)
Only one female chosen	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.6%)
Only one male chosen	1 (0.5%)	2 (1.3%)

Table B shows the total number of female teachers and male teachers chosen by students based on the students' gender and grade.

Table B The Number of Teachers Selected by Gender Versus Student Grade and Gender

Student Grade	9	10	11	12
Student Gender	F/M	F/M	F/M	F/M
Number of female teachers selected	56/22	60/33	61/53	75/35
Number of male teachers selected	42/41	43/42	30/48	27/35

Of all the female students surveyed, 252 selections were female teachers and 142 selections were male teachers. This is a ratio of 2 to 1. Of all the male students surveyed, 143 selections were female teachers and 166 selections were male teachers. This is a ratio of approximately 1 to 1.

The maximum rating for each item on the survey was 5 (best) and the minimum was 1 (worst). Female teachers averaged 4.3 and male teachers averaged 4.0. When only female teachers were chosen the average was 4.2 and when only male teachers were chosen the average was 4.1. Female teachers averaged 4.3 and male teachers averaged 4.0 when students picked one female teacher and one male teacher on their surveys. Table C shows the average ratings for each item in relation to the gender of the teacher. The average rating for each item was figured from all surveys returned with that particular gender.

Table C Survey Items Versus Average Ratings for Female and Male Teachers

Survey Items (each was rated from 1 to 5)	Average Ratings female teachers	male teachers
A. The teacher has a positive attitude.	4.4	4.4
B. The students respect this teacher.	4.0	4.1
C. The teacher encourages the students to learn.	4.5	4.1
D. The students are aware of the classroom rules.	4.4	3.9
E. The teacher enforces classroom and school rules fairly and consistently.	4.3	3.9
F. The students listen during lecture and discussion.	4.2	3.9
G. The teacher monitors the classroom and prevents misbehavior.	4.2	4.1
H. The teacher handles disruptions without getting frustrated.	3.8	4.0

Discussion

In this study women were as likely as men to be selected as effective disciplinarians and, other than one item, the female teachers were rated as high or higher than the male teachers by the students completing the survey. It is possible that the results of this study were influenced by the presence of two specific female instructors at the school surveyed. Both women have well-known reputations as strict, but fair teachers. Still, the results are valuable to women who may feel threatened by gender biases in the classroom. Before the survey was given several female teachers commented on their belief that some students, especially male students, give women less respect than men as classroom managers. Most of these women teachers, including one of the two with the reputation for being strict, felt they were hurt by their gender when disciplining students. This study indicates that the actual conditions may be better than the perceived conditions.

One of the interesting finds in this study concerned the ratios of females to males. The ratio of female teachers to male teachers at the school was about 4 to 3. The ratio of females chosen for the survey to males chosen for the survey was also 4 to 3. In addition, the ratio of female students to male students completing the survey was 4 to 3. It is

possible that the teachers were chosen in numbers that correspond to the actual gender make-up of the staff or it may be that the teachers were chosen in numbers that correspond to the female to male student ratio. Female students were more numerous than male students and both groups showed some bias in favor of their own gender. Female students were more likely than male students to pick two women teachers and male students were more likely than female students to pick two men teachers, but overall the majority of students chose one female and one male teacher.

To look at the differences between groups of students, this study divided them by grade and gender in relation to the total number of female and male teachers chosen. At all grade levels female students tended to choose female teachers and male students tended to choose male teachers. This shows some gender bias, although it may be the result of same sex role modeling. In addition, as the grade level increased, both female and male students chose more female teachers and fewer male teachers. This may be the result of increasing maturity or possibly the result of being taught by more staff members, and therefore, having a greater choice of teachers to consider. Although the ratio of women teachers chosen to male teachers chosen was 4 to 3, female students picked women over men in a ratio of 2 to 1 and even though male students

picked more men, the ratio was very close to 1 to 1.

The average score on survey items for female teachers was 4.3 and for male teachers it was 4.0. Female teachers scored higher than males on four items: "the teacher encourages the students to learn," "the students are aware of the classroom rules," "the teacher enforces classroom and school rules fairly and consistently," and "the students listen during lecture and discussion." On three items the female and male teachers scored about the same: "the students respect this teacher," "the teacher has a positive attitude," and "the teacher monitors the classroom and prevents misbehavior."

On only one item did men score better than women: "the teacher handles disruptions without getting frustrated." Thus, one disturbing result of this survey for women teachers is the belief that women are more likely to get frustrated than men. Although this may appear to be a barrier for female teachers, the other seven items indicate that women are considered as effective, possibly even more effective, than men as classroom managers.

Although the vast majority of the surveys were completed correctly, there were some anomalies. The survey instructions directed the students to choose two teachers that fulfilled the requirements of a well-disciplined class, but twenty-one surveys were returned with one teacher scoring high and one teacher scoring low. Five of these surveys had two male teachers

being rated and were completed by male students (three freshmen and two juniors). A gender bias could be behind these five anomalies because male students were more likely to pick male teachers. It is possible that while rating the two male teachers chosen the student realized one of the men did not fit the criteria of a good classroom manager, but kept him because of his gender.

The other sixteen surveys with one teacher rated high and one rated low included both a man and a woman. In eleven of these surveys the female teacher was rated higher than the male, but student gender did not appear to play a role in these surveys (nine were by girls and seven were by boys). Grade level may have played a role because eight of these sixteen surveys were by freshmen who had a smaller number of staff members from which to choose (maybe they believed only one of their teachers was a good classroom manager). Also, it may be that these sixteen students, with one teacher rated high and one rated low, misunderstood the survey and felt they had to pick one male and one female teacher. If this happened, then the second teacher rated may have scored much lower than the first because he or she was picked by gender rather than abilities.

Four other survey takers (two senior girls and two sophomore boys) may have reversed the scale because both of the teachers they chose scored very low and this would be unusual

when picking the best teachers.

These anomalies are important, but do not negate the overall results because they represent only 25 of the 354 surveys collected (7%). Because these anomalies were a small percentage of the total surveys collected, they were included in the results to avoid negating the opinion of any one student.

Twenty-two of the completed surveys included a response to the note at the end of the survey which asked, "Did I miss any requirements of a well-disciplined class? Please add any that you feel I forgot." Four of the twenty-two simply stated "no", but four others wanted to alter the survey. One student wanted the word "discussion" in place of "talking" in the opening paragraph which explained the characteristics of a well-disciplined class. Another wanted to remove the item "the teacher enforces classroom and school rules fairly and consistently" because she felt high school students know what is expected of them. Two students wanted to ask additional survey questions, but both questions would compromise the anonymity of the teachers being rated by the survey. One question inquired, "How long has the teacher taught?" and the other wanted to know, "Who is the best teacher?" Three students added comments on the importance of effective teaching and nine added comments about the importance of students enjoying the class. Finally, two comments addressed the

pet peeves of some students. One related how some teachers intentionally embarrass students and the other asked that athletes be shown no favoritism. Of the twenty-two students writing comments, seventeen were girls and this may indicate a difference in the way female and male students approached the survey. Four students from each grade wrote a comment on the survey, except for the sophomores. Ten members of this class made comments. This disparity is hard to explain, but possibly the freshmen were less comfortable making comments and the upperclassmen may have been more apathetic. The sophomore class did turn in the most surveys, but not enough to account for such a large difference. Twenty-two comments out of 354 surveys (6%) is a small number, but at least the students were given a chance to add to the survey.

Conclusion

This study explored gender bias in relation to classroom discipline. Gender bias is an unfortunate part of society that can create problems for teachers. Discipline is a major facet of education and necessary for effective teaching. Because research at the college level showed a gender bias against women in areas important to classroom management (like effectiveness), this study expected to find that high school students were biased against women in the area of discipline. However, this study showed little bias against female teachers. In fact, women did as well or better than men in most aspects covered by this study.

Besides showing that gender bias is a much smaller problem than feared, this study has several other implications. It is possible that high school students relate better with teachers of the same sex based on the number of girls choosing two female teachers and the number of boys choosing two male teachers. Another interesting discovery with this study is the increase at each grade level of female teachers picked by both boys and girls. The only real negative for women teachers discovered by this survey was the belief that women are more likely to get frustrated than men. More research is needed to find out if this is an actual difference between men and women or just a perceived difference.

Because of certain limitations of this study, other areas need more research as well. First, this study was conducted in a small, rural school and may yield different results in a larger school with a bigger staff and more discipline problems. Also, only discipline was investigated and research in other areas of teaching (like some of the college studies) may have different results. Future research should also look at discipline in relation to gender bias at the middle school level. Because underclassmen chose more male teachers than upperclassmen, it would be interesting to see how middle school students complete the survey. Finally, an important question concerning the changes in gender bias that may occur between ninth and twelfth grades could be answered by surveying the freshmen again when they are seniors.

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Appendix A

Dear Colleagues,

I need your help in order to finish my thesis and finally receive my Master's. I am going to be taking a survey of our students in a few weeks to see if sexism is present when it comes to discipline. Research shows that in college, female professors suffer from a gender bias found in both male and female students. I want to see if this is true in high school too by looking at the discipline aspect of teaching (generally not a problem in college).

I would like you to please jot down a few ideas or brief examples of what a well-disciplined classroom is like (e.g., students listen, rules are enforced). If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please let me know. Thanks in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kenneth D. Van Oostendorp

Kenneth D. VanOostendorp

Appendix B

Well-Disciplined Classrooms

Circle your grade: 9 10 11 12

your gender: M F

Think of a well-disciplined class-- the teacher and students can be heard while talking, disruptions are handled efficiently, and the students are working to their potential. Now think of two Onsted High School teachers who fulfill the requirements of a well-disciplined class. Rate these teachers on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 is the worst, 5 is the best) for the following items. **Remember to circle the teacher's gender and a number from 1 to 5 for each question for each teacher.**

	TEACHER 1 M / F					TEACHER 2 M / F				
A. The teacher has a positive attitude.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
B. The students respect this teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
C. The teacher encourages the students to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
D. The students are aware of the classroom rules.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
E. The teacher enforces classroom and school rules fairly and consistently.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
F. The students listen during lecture and discussion.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
G. The teacher monitors the classroom and prevents misbehavior.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
H. The teacher handles disruptions without getting frustrated.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Did I miss any requirements of a well-disciplined class? Please add any that you feel I forgot.